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# SOUTH AFRICA AT WAR



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# SOUTH AFRICA AT WAR

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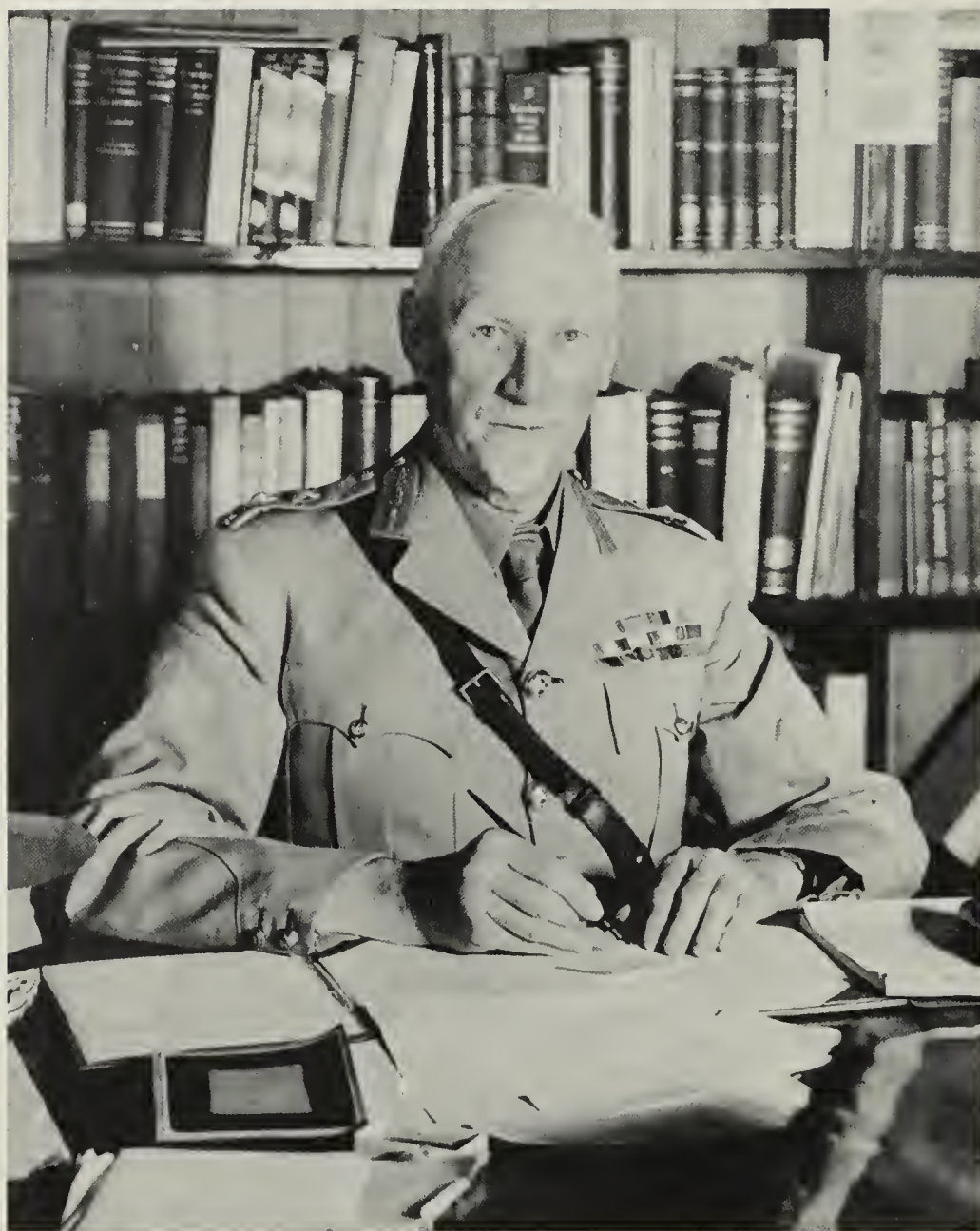


FACSIMILE OF THE UNION COAT OF ARMS

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SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INFORMATION OFFICE

*3101 Massachusetts Avenue  
Washington, D. C.*



*J. C. Smuts*

"The world cause of freedom is also our cause and we shall wage this war for human freedom till God's victory crowns the end."—  
Field Marshal Jan Christiaan Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and Commander-in-Chief of the South African Forces.

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*Union of South Africa*

*South West Africa*

The area of the Union of South Africa (472,550 square miles) shown in comparison with the area of the United States of America (2,973,776 square miles) and the rest of the African Continent. The area of South West Africa, formerly German, is 322,450 square miles.

# *South Africa at War*

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## PREFACE

The Union of South Africa severed relations with Germany on September 4, 1939, struck the first Allied blow against Italy in East Africa on June 11, 1940, and since December 16, 1940, her armed forces have been in almost unbroken combat with Axis forces in East and North Africa. South Africa's part has been played largely out of the limelight, but she has achieved outstanding results and her total war effort, on the home industrial front no less than in the field, easily bears comparison with the efforts of any of the United Nations.

South Africa is a free and independent member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, a Dominion in voluntary partnership with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain, and was free to choose to participate in the war or to remain neutral. The fact that the majority of her white population of 2,230,000 are not of British but are mainly of Dutch and French Huguenot descent, and therefore not moved by sentimental ties when Britain declared war, makes South Africa's prompt entry into the war the more noteworthy. South Africa was under no illusions about the Axis and saw clearly the dangers which would beset her and her own British neighbours in Southern Africa if she did not take timely steps to meet aggression. Rich in strategic minerals and ores and food resources the Union was a most tempting prize at the foot of the African Continent. Moreover, possession of South Africa would put the enemy astride the all-important Cape sea route between the West and the East and effectively throttle this vital channel of supplies to the Middle East.

These dangers apart, there was also South Africa's sense of responsibility to her fellow partners, the nations of the British Commonwealth, jointly forming a powerful bulwark in defence of freedom and democracy—of those ideals to which all the United Nations have now subscribed. Largely unmoved by any sense of obligation to an overseas Motherland, South Africa by her entry into the war played the part expected of a free and freedom-loving country. "There is," says South Africa's Prime Minister, Field Marshal Jan Christiaan Smuts, "no blot on our sovereign independence. We acted as a free and honourable people. Dishonour and sovereignty do not go well together."



The Premier congratulates Sergeant Quentin Smythe, of Durban, on being awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action in North Africa.



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## *Two threats: the strategic picture*

Strategically, South Africa faced two great dangers when war broke out—enemy interference with British and Allied shipping calling at South African ports, and the threat of an Axis push from the north, from Mussolini's East African empire, through the thinly populated and lightly defended British colonies, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Northern and Southern Rhodesia. Field Marshal (then General) Smuts correctly anticipated from the outset that it was only a matter of time before Italy would enter the war on Hitler's side and threaten Southern Africa with his East African army of 200,000 men. South Africa had experience of South Atlantic enemy raiders in the last Great War and fully appreciated the potential danger to the sea lanes round the Cape.

The Union had no navy of its own when war broke out, but relied for the protection of its ports upon the cooperation of its land and air forces with the British naval units stationed at Simonstown (near Cape Town). With heavy burdens devolving upon the British Navy, South Africa took immediate steps to strengthen its coastal defences and to help to safeguard the Cape sea route to the Middle East and Far East. A Seaward Defence Force was created and a number of fishing trawlers, whalers and other small peacetime craft were equipped for minesweeping, anti-submarine and patrol and examination work. These little vessels did very effective work and it was later found possible to send South African minesweeping and anti-submarine flotillas to the Mediterranean. During 1942 the Seaward Defence Force became the "South African Naval Forces," and South Africa is now beginning to talk of having a Navy of its own.

Specially important in South Africa's scheme of Seaward Defence was the work of the bomber reconnaissance squadrons of the South African Air Force. These maintained long-range patrols along the Southern African coastline and registered their first score early in December, 1939, when the German ship "Watussi" was intercepted south of Cape Town. Later some Italian ships were rounded up by the South African Air Force and more recently the Air Force, co-operating with South African and British patrol vessels, rounded up a convoy of Vichy French ships attempting to pass the Cape.

## *A Surprise for the Duce*

On land, preparations were pushed forward not only to defend the Union but to meet aggression far beyond the Union's own borders. How the Union of South Africa met and surmounted tremendous difficulties in raising and equipping an army and meeting supply problems at home and in the field will be described later. For this bird's-eye survey of operations against the enemy the story of the land fighting in Africa opens with Italy's entry into the war on June 10, 1940. South Africa had a surprise ready for the Duce. The South African Air Force, the Union's premier striking arm, had taken up battle stations in Northern Kenya, some two thousand miles north of the Union itself. Within a few hours of the jackal emerging to share Hitler's prey the South Africans were off on the hunt. On June 11th the General Staff Communique from Nairobi stated: "Heavy bombers of the South African Air Force attacked Moyale and vicinity in Abyssinia with conspicuous success . . ." Among other damage, the bombers destroyed a great shed packed with motor transport. The South African Air Force has been continuously in action since that date and South African fighter and bomber pilots have played a big part in routing the Axis forces in Africa.

## *Offensive in East Africa*

It was some months before the South African troops, the "Springboks," were ready to take the field in East Africa. (The springbok is a graceful type of South African antelope which is the Union's national emblem, and South African sportsmen participating in international contests, notably Rugby-football, are known as "Springboks.") While the South African Air Force was pounding at Italian bases in Abyssinia and gathering invaluable information from reconnaissance flights deep into enemy territory, South African troops were streaming into base camps in Northern Kenya to undergo intensive training under the desert conditions under which, only a few months later, they were to fight. Frontier outposts were manned and frequently, in patrol actions, the men had a foretaste of the real thing. South African engineers were meanwhile working wonders in deserts formerly marked only by the tracks of Somali camel caravans. Roads were built and wells established at strategic points, and the wastes converted into a land supporting the largest armed force ever sent outside the Union.

By the end of the year 1940 the South Africans, well equipped and well trained, were ready to strike and their first action, appropriately enough, took place on December 16—"Dingaan's Day," a national holiday in South Africa commemorating a famous episode



Opening phase of the attack against Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. A South African convoy crossing the desert with supplies for Springbok troops.

in hostile country in the history of the South African pioneers a century ago. The action, the first real battle in the East African campaign, was completely successful. On Christmas Day a South African convoy stretching thirty-five miles across the desert was moving into position for the general offensive.

Several books have been written about the East African campaign and the major role played in it by the South African forces. There is the semi-official account, "Vanguard of Victory," written by two war correspondents of the South African Bureau of Information. There is Carel Birkby's "Springbok Victory," Eric Rosenthal's "The Fall of Italian East Africa," and there is the British official story of the conquest of Italian East Africa, "The Abyssinian Campaigns," which records the part played by the various Imperial as well as by the South African forces. It is a fascinating story of campaigning under great hardships, in incredibly difficult country, under extremes of heat and cold. It tells how South Africans dislodged the enemy from one stronghold after another, how their engineers overcame seemingly insuperable difficulties, how they won the race to Addis Ababa which they were the first to enter, how they advanced 1,725 miles in 53 days and were in at the death when the Duke of Aosta surrendered.

“No history of the East African Campaign,” says the British official account, “is complete which fails to pay tribute to the work of the South Africans. Their infantry brigades acquitted themselves with distinction on every occasion when they were in action, and their technical units, which assisted both East African and West African brigades, played an important part in almost every battle. Every soldier who fought in Kenya, Italian Somaliland or Abyssinia knows how much our victory owes to the work of the South African artillery, the South African engineers and the South African medical units. He also knows how much it meant, during the weeks of advance across coverless deserts and congested passes, not to be subjected to relentless air attack. For his freedom of movement, which was so largely responsible for the record-breaking achievements of that remarkable two months, he has to thank the South African Air Force.”

The campaign was over in May, 1941. The enemy was cleared from the shores of the Red Sea and the way was open for Allied ships to take men and material to the Middle East. In June it was announced that the first contingent of South African troops had arrived in North Africa and that the South African Air Force was operating there with the Royal Air Force.

### *The Threat from Japan*

South Africa sent splendid fighting men to the Middle East and they were well equipped. South Africa has known war and fighting through many generations and Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans come of equally fine fighting stock. Intellectually and physically both races in South Africa breed strong individualists. A high British officer once described the Springboks as “tanks among men,” and they are renowned for their qualities as commando or guerilla fighters. The word “commando” first became familiar during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 when the swift-moving Dutch Republican columns caught the interest of the world as they struck at and evaded the greatly superior British forces. Today, as in the War of 1914–1918, Afrikaners and Britons are fighting side by side and they share the fighting qualities which, a generation ago, had made their fathers respect each other.

Bearing in mind that South Africa has a population of only 2,230,000 whites from whom to draw her fighting men—the Natives (the black Bantu races) being not, as yet, armed for combatant purposes—she has, with more than 200,000 men under arms, established no mean record in this war. Strong forces are being retained in South Africa for the Union’s own defence, for South Africa in effect faced a second front when Japan entered the war. South Africa’s harbours suddenly assumed a new significance as British



South African-made howitzers on the testing ground. The topees and bush shirts worn by the gun crew are typical of the South African Army uniform.

and Allied naval bases fell in the Far East and the enemy has already repeatedly struck at Allied shipping off the African East coast. In March, 1942, General Smuts told the Union Parliament that Japan constituted a more fundamental menace to the Union than any European power and the situation was unprecedented. If the country were attacked by Japan he would not hesitate to use any weapon in defending South Africa's security but would train and arm Natives to help to defend South Africa.

### ***Strong Forces in Desert***

Two months later it was announced that South African forces, assisted by a strong contingent of the South African Air Force, were operating in Madagascar.

The focal point of South Africa's war effort in the field, however, remained in North Africa where, after June, 1941, the Union built up powerful expeditionary units to operate with the British Eighth Army. South Africa contributed two full divisions to the Allied forces in the Middle East, the First and the Second Divisions, but these represented only part of her expeditionary units. There was

the South African Air Force, flying mainly American-built bombers and fighters, manned by Afrikaans and English-speaking young men who were veterans of the East African campaign. There were construction, maintenance and repair units carrying out invaluable work at the base camps; there were medical and nursing units, road-making units, and all those other bodies, working behind the lines, which are essential to maintaining an army in the field. There were even water-divining units who discovered water under the desert sands where the wandering Arabs had not suspected its presence. There were hundreds of South African girls in Cairo who had gone north as members of the South African Women's Auxiliary Army Services and of the South African Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

While the Springbok forces in North Africa were being built up, South African airmen were repeatedly in action against the enemy and participated in the evacuation of Crete. A South African railway construction company crossed into Palestine and Syria and built an important railway line through difficult country along the Mediterranean coast. A pioneering corps of Natives from Basutoland (the Native protectorate in the Union) provided the labour force. The Springboks repeatedly engaged in patrol actions with the enemy.

### *Sidi Resegh*

Their first big test came at the battle of Sidi Resegh in November, 1941, when for two days South African infantry faced and held a powerful German panzer force. This battle has been compared with the famous stand by the South African Infantry Brigade at Delville Wood in July, 1916, when they held a vital sector of the Allied front line for five days and nights at a terrific cost. Delville Wood Sunday is reverently commemorated in South Africa every year. Of Sidi Resegh it has been officially stated that the Fifth South African Brigade participating in the battle gained "limitless distinction."

A few weeks later the South African Second Division gained its first battle honours. Within fourteen days in December, 1941, and January, 1942, the Second Division, commanded by Major General I. P. deVilliers, scored a "hat trick," taking Bardia, Sollum, and Halfaya Pass. In the near-disaster that overtook the Eighth Army in June, 1942, when Rommel pushed his way into Egypt, the Second Division, then commanded by Major General H. B. Klopper, suffered grievous losses in the fall of Tobruk. The First Division, commanded by Major General Dan Pienaar (a brilliant and popular officer who lost his life in a flying accident in December, 1942), fought its way out of Gazala and subsequently played an important part in stopping Rommel's advance at El Alamein. On October 23, 1942, when the Eighth Army commenced its victorious advance that swept Rommel out of Egypt and Libya, it was the Springboks of the South African



Planning and plotting the next move "out in the blue." South African armoured cars engaged in daring patrol work in the East African Campaign.

First Division who set the ball rolling at El Alamein and took all their objectives in the first few hours of hard fighting. After that they were well to the fore in the hunt across the Libyan sands.

Meanwhile General Smuts had appealed to South Africa to "avenge Tobruk" and in September he was able to tell the country that his appeal for 7,000 recruits had resulted in the enrolment of nearly 10,000 men and 2,000 women. The Second Division was more than replaced and Tobruk was fully avenged. South African armoured cars led the way when Tobruk was reoccupied by the Eighth Army.

### *Every Man a Volunteer*

The term "recruits" requires explanation. The Union Government has the power to conscript under the South African Defence Act of 1912 and may call on every able-bodied man to serve in the defence of his country, within or without the Union. This power has never been invoked and in this war as well as in the last every single South African soldier is a volunteer. To overcome a certain difficulty of interpretation as to what "without the Union" meant recruits signed a special attestation undertaking to serve anywhere

on the African Continent and every soldier wears an orange flash on each shoulder indicating that he is a volunteer prepared to serve anywhere in Africa.

"Anywhere in Africa" also requires a word of explanation. When the South African Parliament resolved to enter the war on September 4, 1939, it was with the proviso that South African troops would not be sent overseas as was done in the last Great War. It has been suggested that this was partly dictated by a desire not to exacerbate isolationist sentiment in South Africa—because an isolationist minority opposed South Africa's entry into the war. A more pressing reason is suggested by the development of the war itself. General Smuts and his Government correctly anticipated that Africa itself would sooner or later be drawn into the maelstrom and that the small South African nation—which despite its handful of two and a quarter million whites is the largest settled white community on the whole of the African Continent—would have to face dangerous threats in Africa. At the outset of the war many thousands of South Africans would have made any sacrifice to go to France as their fathers had done, and General Smuts's demand that they should remain and prepare for the danger nearer home was a supreme test of their loyalty and sense of duty. The war came to them speedily enough and their trust and confidence in their great leader has been more than justified.

### *Service Outside Africa*

On his return from London in November, 1942, General Smuts paid a flying visit to the Middle East battlefield, as he has done from time to time since the Springboks moved north. He subsequently announced that the South African Parliament would be asked to sanction the dispatch of South African troops to non-African theatres of war once the situation in North Africa had been cleared up. This announcement was received with enthusiasm by the Springboks, troops returning from operations in Madagascar cheering wildly when they heard the news in Johannesburg. On February 4th, 1943, the South African Parliament duly adopted a motion permitting South African soldiers to serve overseas and the Springboks immediately began to attest for overseas service.

South Africa is continuing to build up her fighting forces. In June, 1942, General Smuts announced the Government's decision to convert the two South African Divisions in the north into tank divisions. He also announced the re-organisation of the South African Army on the home front into two new commands, the Inland Command under Major General George Brink, and the Coastal Command under Major General I. P. deVilliers. Held in reserve all over the country are the old Burgher (citizen) Commandos, men too old for the front,





Inspecting and counting booty captured from the enemy in Abyssinia where, crushing all resistance, the South Africans advanced 1,725 miles in 53 days.

but who are amongst the world's best marksmen, steeped in the tradition of mobile fighting, of quick movement and individual thinking. They are South Africa's "Home Guard" and they are made of stern stuff.

In September, 1942, it was announced that a new Southern African Command had been established under which Southern Rhodesian Forces are placed at the disposal of the General Officer Commanding the South African Defence Forces. This step was taken after full consultation between Southern Rhodesia (one of the most senior of the British Colonies) and the Union of South Africa.

### *Air-Training Scheme*

South Africa did not participate in the Empire Air-Training Scheme in Canada as she was already engaged in an intensive air-training scheme when war broke out and needed all her fighting men at home. Moreover, South Africa, with its great plains and unlimited sunshine, is an ideal country for flying. An invitation was extended to Great Britain to train R.A.F. personnel in South Africa in cooperation with the South African Air Force training scheme. Full advan-

tage has been taken of this offer and strong contingents of R.A.F. men have trained with the Springbok airmen at training schools scattered all over the Union.

South African airmen are now required to undergo preliminary training with armoured car units with a view to closer cooperation between air and ground forces. August, 1942, saw the formation of a Glider Wing as an important part in the training of air pupils for the South African Air Force. A "Help Aviation" movement has caught the enthusiasm of South African youth, school boys and girls joining Junior Air Force Clubs and receiving simple technical instruction.

Some six or seven hundred South Africans who joined before the war or were permitted to leave South Africa in the early months of the war are serving with the Royal Air Force in the United Kingdom and between them they had collected up to the end of 1942 nearly a hundred awards for gallantry. Two of them, Squadron Leader John Nettleton, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for the daring daylight raid on Augsburg (Germany), and Wing Commander A. G. Malan, D.F.C. (with Bar), D.S.O. (with Bar), who long held the record as Britain's ace fighter pilot, paid brief visits to the United States during 1942.

Another South African who has gained the Victoria Cross in this war is Sergeant Quintin Smythe who was awarded this high distinction for gallantry in action with the South Africans at Alem Hamza on the North African battlefield on June 5, 1942.

## ***Port Development***

On the naval side of the picture there are hundreds of South Africans, Royal Naval Volunteer Reservists, who are serving with the British Navy. On February 28, 1942, General Smuts laid the foundation stone of a South African Naval Training Base at Cape Town and six months later a Royal Naval Officers' Training Establishment was started near Port Elizabeth (Cape) and commissioned as "H.M.S. Good Hope." This establishment trains men who, having served on the lower deck, have been recommended for commissions.

Meanwhile South Africa's ports were being equipped to meet the demands made on them by the great convoy traffic round the Cape and by the loss of naval bases in the Far East. Cape Town's ambitious port development scheme, started before the war, is being rapidly pushed forward. The city will have one of the greatest docks in the Southern Hemisphere, the scheme embracing a graving dock which will accommodate the world's largest ships. East London is to have a graving dock capable of taking large merchant vessels and the largest type of British cruiser, and to Durban's already extensive port facilities will be added a floating dry dock.

## *Women Strongly Mobilised*

To round off the "field" picture of South Africa's war effort, as distinct from her industrial war effort which is a remarkable story in itself, mention must be made of the outstanding contribution made by the women of South Africa. The South African women started to register voluntarily for national service in an emergency several months before war broke out and they placed their lists at the Government's disposal in the opening days of World War No. 2. A Women's Army Corps was promptly formed under Defence Force regulations and recruits began to pour into the South African Women's Auxiliary Army Services (the "Waasies" as they are known in South Africa) and the South African Women's Auxiliary Air Force (the "Waafs"). The latest published figure of women doing full time service under military conditions and discipline in the "Waasies" and the "Waafs" is over 15,000, and, as mentioned before, many of these women were sent to East Africa and North Africa as nurses, typists, technicians, etc. Officer Commanding the "Waafs" is Doreen Dunning, herself an experienced pilot who, at the age of 24, was the youngest Lieutenant-Colonel in the British Commonwealth. Another young South African woman, Lieut. Denny Morrison, is the first woman in the British Commonwealth to become an armament instructor and is lecturing to South African pilots and observers qualifying as armament specialists and instructors. A number of South African women have been trained as artillery specialists and help to "man" South Africa's heavy coastal batteries.

More than 65,000 South African women giving part-time service to the State are members of a voluntary organisation named the South African Women's Auxiliary Services (the "Sawas"). This body is efficiently organised on a nation-wide scale and is rendering valued services in running canteens, organising gifts and comforts, running rest rooms, giving nursing aid, entertaining troops, etc.

## *The Natives' Contribution*

While they have not, as yet, been sent into the field as combatants, South Africa's non-Europeans (the Natives and the Coloureds) are making a massive contribution to the country's war effort. Many thousands of black and coloured (including Malay) troops are in the army as drivers, cooks, stretcher bearers, labourers, road builders, etc. A Cape Coloured unit won high official praise during the Abyssinian campaign for a remarkable piece of road engineering which made possible the rapid advance of the British and South African forces into Eritrea. Non-European labour is of incalculable value to South Africa's industrial war machine. Some of the Natives, like the Zulus, are of splendid fighting stock and have repeatedly urged to be permitted to carry arms in defence of the Union.

South Africa's Central Organisation for Technical Training equips men not only for skilled work in war factories but also for a career in civilian life.



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## *The industrial front: repair shop of the Middle East*

On the home industrial front in this war the Union of South Africa has a record to which she can point with justifiable pride. Industrially, South Africa is a young country. Up to the time of the first World War South Africa was mainly a pastoral and agricultural country, the industrial side of the picture being almost completely filled in by gold and diamond mining developed during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. After 1914, when world transport and supply problems caused South Africa to look to her own resources, industrialisation took a sudden upward trend which continued steadily until World War No. 2 forced an advance which made even South Africans rub their eyes.

In 1917-18 the number of manufacturing establishments in South Africa was 5,918, employing slightly under 15,000 whites and 84,000 non-Europeans (Natives and Coloureds), the value of the gross output of these factories being £60,000,000 (about \$250,000,000). By 1938-39 the number of establishments had grown to 10,256, employing 144,838 whites and 207,662 non-Europeans and with a gross output valued at £199,617,000 (about \$800,000,000). The latest official report on the distribution of the Union's working population shows a total of 741,576 workers in South Africa.

These industries had created a wide field for investment and contributed very materially to South Africa's sound economic position. Under the stimulus of wartime needs—needs created by inability to secure many types of vital supplies from overseas—South Africa's industries have developed at an almost phenomenal rate, considering the youth of the country, its population limits and restricted technical resources. As one prominent member of the Government has put it, South Africa's industries have developed as much in three years of war as they would normally have done in 25 years.

Industrial legislation in South Africa has kept pace with industrial activity. The new Workmen's Compensation Act which became law on January 1, 1943, gives insured persons a 35% benefit more than previously and extends the range of products to which the Act applies.

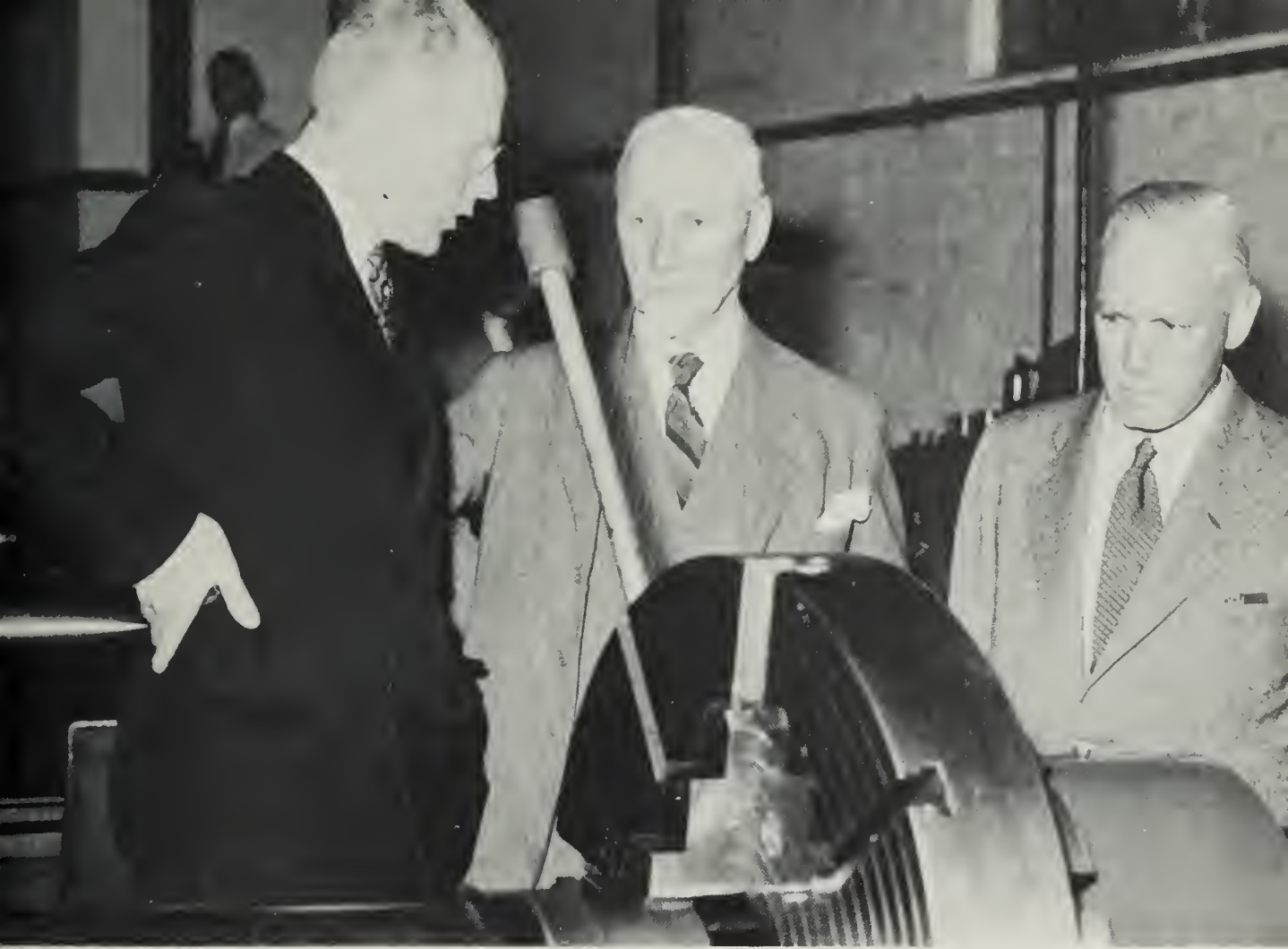
## *Pre-War Trade*

During the pre-war years Great Britain and South Africa were each the other's best customer, Great Britain selling some \$175,000,000 worth of goods to South Africa per annum and buying some \$50,000,000 worth (excluding gold) from South Africa. The United States was South Africa's next best customer, the balance of trade being heavily in the U.S.A.'s favour. In 1939 South Africa imported from the United States to the tune of approximately \$70,000,000, chiefly motor cars, chassis, machinery and clothing, and (excluding gold bullion) sold goods to the United States to the value of approximately \$10,500,000, chiefly wool, sheepskins, diamonds, asbestos, manganese ore and chromium ore. The U.S.A.-South African trade figures showed a sharp increase in 1940, the last year for which, under wartime regulations, figures were permitted to be published. United States exports to South Africa reached \$104,000,000, while imports from South Africa, excluding gold, were valued at \$47,000,000. During this period the United States was taking the bulk of the Union's diamond, chrome and manganese shipments and almost all of 3,000 long tons of corundum normally exported from South Africa. Many American inquiries for South African-made products were received by the Union including crawfish tails, jams, wines, minerals, ores, skins, etc., the U.S.A. recognising more and more the Union's potentialities as a source of strategic minerals.

## *Supplies Cut Off*

Industrially and militarily, South Africa had made little or no preparation for war. Recruiting was soon in full swing, Active Citizen Force regiments all over the country rapidly bringing up their numbers to war strength. But the recruits had to be equipped as well as trained, and here lay the rub.

Defence planning before the war was based on the comfortable theory that it would take at least six months before any European war directly affected South Africa and that in this period the Union could secure most of the up-to-date equipment it required from Great Britain and the United States. This dream was soon dispelled. The prospect of obtaining early aid from other countries disappeared with tragic suddenness as the flood-tides of military disaster poured through Norway, Holland, Belgium and finally through Flanders and France to the British Channel ports and enemy submarines started taking an ever-mounting toll of Allied shipping. South Africa was largely thrown back on its own resources and the realities of war in terms of mass production of arms and munitions, clothing equipment and foodstuffs, no less than in terms of hard fighting on the African Continent itself, became the measure of South Africa's own democratic liberties.



Field Marshal Smuts and Dr. van der Bijl, Director-General of War Supplies, (right), inspecting howitzer production in a South African ordnance plant.

When war broke out South Africa had only three factories equipped to produce war material, the most important of these being a plant, attached to the South African Mint at Pretoria, which was producing .303 cartridges in sufficient quantity for the Union's own needs.

Within two years South Africa's war factories increased to more than 600.

### *War Supplies Organised*

The emergency with which South Africa found herself faced in the early half of 1940 called for quick decision. Fortunately, the authority for those decisions and the organisation for initiating equally quick action had already been created. One of the first acts of General Smuts on assuming office as Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief in 1939 was to embark on the bold experiment of creating a special civilian directorate, independent of military jurisdiction, to acquire technical military stores and material in the shortest possible time and to train rapidly and efficiently a large number of technical workers for war services. This body was named the War Supplies Board and as its Director-General the Prime

Minister appointed an Afrikaans-speaking South African with exceptional qualifications, Dr. Hendrik Johannes van der Bijl.

Dr. van der Bijl, short, blond and dapper, is a powerful personality and an outstanding figure in Empire war production and in the scientific world generally. He took his degrees at Leipzig and was for some time assistant professor in physics at Dresden before coming to the United States to carry out research work with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and with Western Electric. He invented more than a score of devices and improvements relating to telegraph, telephone, wireless, and electrical engineering. One of his inventions proved invaluable in long-distance telephony, and its direct result was the establishing in 1914 of telephonic communication between New York and San Francisco.

Van der Bijl returned to South Africa some twenty years ago to take charge of the establishment of the South African Iron and Steel Corporation (IsCOR) of which he became the chairman, and also became chairman of South Africa's Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM). His position thus gave him command of the steel and electrical resources upon which South Africa's industrial war effort largely depended, but he brought to his new and formidable task an even greater asset—an intimate knowledge of the extensive though widely scattered secondary industrial resources of the country. Armed with ministerial powers under South Africa's emergency regulations to organise industry and to coordinate the activities of Government departments, engineering societies, labour unions, and manufacturers, in order to expedite the production and acquisition of war supplies of all types, van der Bijl lost no time in rallying to the service of the nation scores of leaders in mining, engineering, industry, commerce and labour, and the large railway workshops. Through panels of experts and consultant advisory committees and an executive labour committee on which the four principal trade unions in South Africa were permanently represented, the framework of a comprehensive production organisation was rapidly constructed and South Africa's wartime industrial machine swept into action.

### *Plant Improvised*

South Africa had no great industries which could immediately be classified as being unnecessary to the war effort and geared down to give preference to more important work. There was little scope for switching skilled labour from any of the existing industries to industries primarily concerned with war requirements. Another serious drawback was that South Africa had no machine tool industry and was compelled to improvise when it laid down plant for the manufacture of all those wartime requirements which it could no longer import from the United Kingdom and America.





Packing assembled hand grenades. Many thousands of South African women are in the auxiliary services or doing skilled work in the war factories.

But South Africa improvised and improvised brilliantly. She was fortunate in the possession of the heavy engineering industries serving the needs of the great gold-mining industry, in the possession of important repair and constructional shops serving South Africa's State-controlled railways and harbours, in the possession of her young but flourishing iron and steel industry and of almost unlimited resources in gold, iron ore, and other base metals and raw materials required for wartime production. Electrical power was cheap and plentiful. There was also a big explosives industry, mainly serving the gold mines, one unit alone being the largest of its kind in the world.

The output of the steel industry at the outbreak of the war was about 325,000 ingot tons per annum representing less than half the normal steel consumption of South Africa, the balance being imported mostly from Europe with a small quantity coming from America. Iscor's production was rapidly stepped up, production coming within measurable distance of South Africa's full wartime requirements. New plants were brought into production and the range of war material produced steadily increased. The industry has the advantage of almost unrivaled supplies of raw materials, drawing

the bulk of its supplies of iron ore from its own mine situated at Thabazimbi ("mountain of iron") in the northern Transvaal Province. This is a haematite ore of great purity running 65/67% metallic iron. In 1941 it was announced that Iscor was shipping 40,000 tons per month of this ore to the United Kingdom to take the place of high grade ore previously obtained from Sweden and Spain. Enormous deposits of high grade iron ore are also available in other parts of South Africa.

### *Some Vital Supplies*

Coal deposits are extensive, some of South Africa's big electric power plants being actually situated on coal fields. South Africa's annual coal output today is approximately 20,000,000 tons which is playing a vital part in supplying bunkers and the export coal on which a great deal of the Allies' war effort in the Middle East depends. That the Union's huge coal reserves are cheaply mined is illustrated by the fact that the average pit's mouth price of coal during 1941 was just over 5s 10d (\$1.17)—the lowest in the world. The collieries have been able to respond to vital wartime demands made upon them, thanks to the relatively shallow depths at which the coal can be mined and to the modern mine equipment installed before the war. Many new pits have been opened since 1939. Two coal pits near Johannesburg are alone turning out coal at the rate of 10,000 tons per day, or roughly 3½ million tons per annum.

South Africa is one of the main sources of supply of manganese ore in the British Commonwealth and exports supplies to Great Britain and the United States. The Union also mines extensive chrome deposits, considerable tonnages of which have been sent to the United States.

South Africa's pre-war mechanical engineering activities were largely devoted to the erection of new plants, such as large new mining reduction plants and the maintenance of machinery installed in the mines, in the big railway undertakings and in industries generally. Over the past ten years many new plants have been erected, including the plants at Iscor itself. Almost all these plants were built of steel and this activity led to a rapid growth of the structural steel industry with the result that the plants and equipment in existence at the outbreak of war were both large and modern. For the size of the country and youth of its industries, South Africa's ability to undertake structural steel work was exceptional.

### *Iscor Fills the Breach*

Iscor became the backbone of South Africa's arms and munitions production, producing gun barrels, light and heavy bombs, armoured plates for fighting vehicles, ship repairs, armour-piercing steel for



Pressing steel helmets for Springbok troops. A young iron and steel industry at Pretoria is the backbone of the Union's arms and munitions production.

anti-tank purposes, high quality carbon steel for small arms components, manganese steel for helmets, and special steels for other technical requirements.

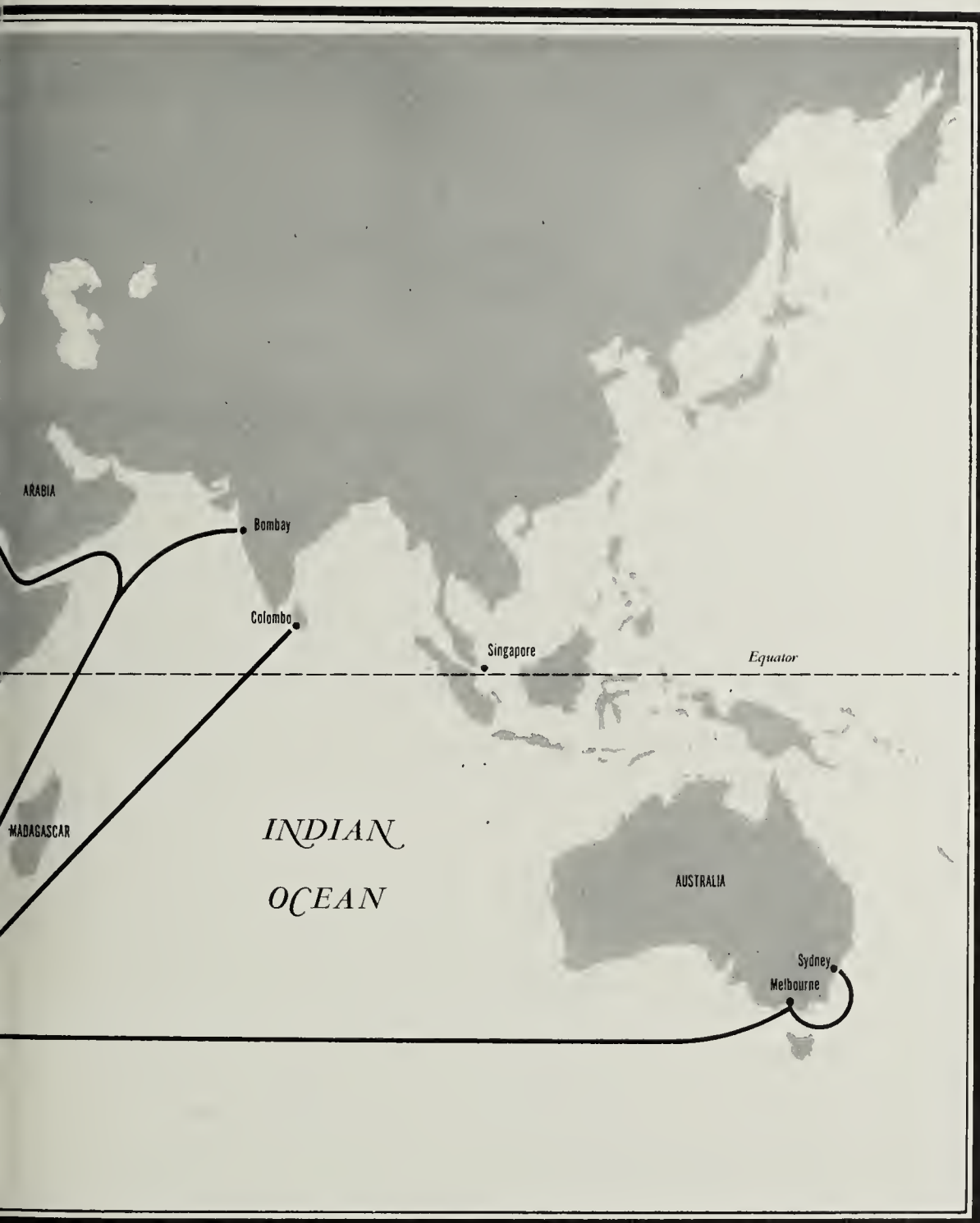
The industry has been rapidly expanded in the past three years. Iscor's share capital has been increased and provision made to expand the plant's capacity to 600,000 tons per annum and to extend the range of finished steel products. One new unit under construction is a plate mill with a range capable of supplying practically the whole of the Union's own requirements. This mill is being erected at Vereeniging near Johannesburg and will form part of the new large steel works to be erected there.

South African engineering industries generally are being geared up to maintain essential supplies in farm machinery and implements required for the national food drive. During 1942 about 4,000 tons of farm machinery and spare parts were made by local engineering firms and foundries, but in 1943 it is expected that the output will reach some 12,000 tons.

The workshops of the gold mines and of the State-controlled South African Railways & Harbours added their big quotas to the Union's wartime armaments and munitions production. The work-



From the early months of the war the Cape sea route has been the United Nations' most vital link between the West and the East. With the virtual closing of the Mediterranean the Cape became once more the "Tavern of



the Seas," the converging point of shipping lanes from all parts of the free world. Great convoys carrying men and material to the Middle East battlefields and elsewhere have been reprovisioned at Cape Town and Durban.

shops of the mines produced anti-tank guns, heavy bombs, and shells. The railway workshops produced a large range of gun and mortar components, gun carriages, fuses, aerial bombs, gun sights, army vehicle bodies, portable light and power supplies, field electrical equipment, etc., etc. These workshops also undertook a great volume of repair work, including urgent shipping repairs.

### ***“Repair Shop of the Middle East”***

An outstanding feature of South Africa's war effort is the repairs carried out in the Union for the Allied forces in the Middle East. The Union's workshops have been organised to carry out repairs on a very comprehensive scale for the fighting machines used in North Africa, and it was estimated at one stage during 1942 that more than half a million spares had been sent north. Tens of thousands of replacement parts for guns, tanks and aircraft have been manufactured in the Union and sent north, this service proving of immeasurable value in putting damaged fighting equipment back into service with a minimum of delay.

The Union has been called the “repair shop of the Middle East” and in this sphere alone has made an incalculable contribution to the success of the Allied armies in North Africa.

Oil tanks for the British Admiralty have been made in the Union, pontoons and bridges were made for use in Abyssinia, and steel sections urgently required for military engineering work in the Middle East were sent north.

### ***Machine Tool Industry***

South Africa has taken a special and just pride in its armoured car production. A specially designed type of armoured car was produced for use in rugged and difficult country in Abyssinia. The chassis and engines for these cars were imported from America and the bodies were built of South African steel and the wheels shod with South African-processed bullet-proof rubber. The cars were well armed, fast, and manoeuvrable and were eminently adapted to the fast commando type of fighting to which South African soldiers are accustomed. These cars, which are undergoing constant improvements in design, have proved a model to the United Nations and have shown their worth also in the sands of the Western Desert. The Union has produced about 80 different types of army vehicles, including general service wagons, mobile workshops, petrol tankers, cable-laying, searchlight, water-pumping and purification lorries, X-Ray and dental vans, various types of ambulances, wireless transmitter and receiving vans, Vickers gun carriers, mortar carriers, etc.

One of the most remarkable chapters in the story of South Africa's war effort on the home front is the way in which she improvised



Assembling a batch of South African-made mortars. Much of the plant for turning out urgently needed Army requirements was improvised on the spot.

when urgently needed technical supplies from overseas were cut off. The country, for instance, had no machine tool industry of its own. But South Africa did the next best thing—a census was taken of machine tools throughout the country and these were assembled in larger and more centralised units, and a considerable portion of South Africa's machine shops became transformed from repair shops to mass production units. A machine tool industry has now been started at Johannesburg, and South Africa is gradually filling its own requirements in this field too. Where urgently needed technical requirements could not be filled from overseas, South Africa's engineers and technicians invariably managed to improvise something on the spot, and in some cases they have produced an article which has been eagerly adopted by their allies.

South Africa has, for instance, developed one of the most advanced gun sights produced in the British Commonwealth and the British Government has placed very large orders for this delicate sight which is mass-produced in a Transvaal factory. It is also the proud boast of South African technicians and industrialists that they carried out a plan for the production of howitzers in about six months, depending almost exclusively on local materials and local ingenuity. An old

manufacturing country overseas took two years to achieve this same object.

Because valuable time would be lost in awaiting the importation of a shell-forging plant, South African engineers ambitiously blue-printed a plant to be constructed wholly from home resources. In six months the project was finished and producing ahead of available machining facilities. The job entailed the making of castings larger than any ever undertaken by the local steel industry. Iscor engineers were faced with the problems of suiting the basic South African steel to use as gun barrels. Previously armament factories abroad had attempted only acid steel, but the South African product was made possible for the purpose by an intricate "proofing" which passed the most severe tests. Engineering shops 1,000 miles apart were mobilised by the Government, cooperatively tooling the intricate components of the howitzers.

One Transvaal company built, among other things, a bullet-piercing and bullet-assembling machine, while another made several lathes and produced machines of various types for foundry work. Electrical engineering workshops designed, manufactured, tested and despatched oil-cooled reactors for arc furnace control necessary for the production of special steel, just five days after receiving the inquiry. The reactors weighed nearly six tons and consisted of more than 8,000 parts and were made without any existing drawings.

### ***How Output Increased***

Figures comparing the output of South Africa's war factories in December, 1942, with the output in December, 1941, were given in a report published recently by Dr. van der Bijl. They showed the following increases:

Small arms ammunition output, 250% higher.

Shell bodies, 5½ times as great.

Cartridge cases, twice as great.

Fuses, twice as great.

Mortar bombs, twice as great.

Grenades, 25 times as great.

Land mines, nearly three times as great.

Aerial bombs, 15 times as great.

The army clothing program consumed 15,000,000 yards of cloth annually.

Blankets were being delivered at the rate of 2,000,000 per annum, delivered at remarkably low cost.

The Army boot and shoe program averaged monthly more than 400,000 pairs.

The mechanising of the South African Army called for more than 30,000 vehicles of more than 80 different designs, of which





Women engaged in electric welding. South African engineers designed much of the vital plant and equipment now used in the Union's war factories.

more than 25,000 were fitted with bodies designed and built in the Union.

### ***Rocketing Production Targets***

Other points in Dr. van der Bijl's report were:

The value of all orders so far accepted by the Union from the Eastern Group Supply Council exceeds £25,000,000 (more than \$100,000,000). In the past three years orders placed with South Africa's war industries, including those on behalf of British and other Allied Governments, have exceeded £100,000,000 (more than \$400,000,000).

Research by South African engineers has resulted in vital scientific equipment being made in the Union, such as gunfire control instruments entailing optical glass grinding to an accuracy of twelve-millionths of an inch.

Only about 15% of technical production work is undertaken by private commercial concerns. The balance is carried out in Government-controlled plants or in annexes to private plants controlled by the Director-General of War Supplies, or by the mines and

national undertakings supplying on a net-cost basis. Work undertaken on a commercial basis by private firms is subject to strict price control.

Production generally has been stepped up by the entry into industry of thousands of South African women. In the engineering industry alone some 10,000 women provide "diluted labour," and their services have proved of the greatest value.

Dr. van der Bijl's report added: "Our rocketing targets of production have called for more and more machines, and despite our ingenuity and improvising wherever possible, Great Britain and America have been called upon for a great many army machine tools and cutting tools. We have received many, some of them machines which have literally broken down bottlenecks which were hindering production. We have been able to assure America that the machines they send us are not standing idle—most of them are in use 24 hours a day. Where possible machines have been made in the Union, but much is beyond our capacity and we still look to America for her continued assistance."

### *Notable Contributions by Railways*

A particularly noteworthy contribution to South Africa's war effort has been made by the South African Railways & Harbours. This organisation is State-controlled and is the largest single organisation in the country employing more than 130,000 men and women, including technicians and experts in almost every branch of industrial science. At the outbreak of war the railways had more than 20 workshops equipped and staffed on a scale and for a range of manufacture not found anywhere else in South Africa under single control. Moreover, the Railways & Harbours Administration had at its disposal a nation-wide transportation and communication service, one of the most vital factors in war. Out of a total of 70,000 white employees the Railways & Harbours contributed more than 10,000 men to the Union's fighting services.

But the Administration's greatest contribution to the Union's war effort came through its workshops. The mechanical workshops of the railways became the nucleus of the Union's munitions industry. These workshops were unhesitatingly put at the disposal of the War Supplies Directorate for this purpose, only absolutely essential needs of the service being maintained. One of the largest and busiest establishments allocated 80 per cent of its working time to munitions. The eight-hour day stretched into a twelve-hour day in practically all shops engaged in munitions production. In one workshop alone more than 100 different items of war were produced. One depot turned out armoured cars in large numbers; another welded troop-carrier and general service bodies. Another produced great

airplane hangars, and wireless masts for military purposes. At the other end of the scale the workshops produced instruments so delicate that they had to be machined to an accuracy of one one-thousandth of an inch, and a gun director for artillery the size of a small camera containing 136 parts, all hand-made.

Between these extremes of size and delicacy the railway workshops produced many hundreds of items required by the Army in metal, wood, leather, canvas, and plastic—electric generators complete with switch gear for field hospitals, gun sights, bombs, shell boxes, mortars—even assegais (for Native sentries) and floating targets.

Once when a big contingent of men was being equipped for urgent despatch to the north, railway body-builders worked for 36 hours at a stretch converting 52 van bodies to ambulance use. As a matter of ordinary daily routine this workshop turned out 25 troop-carrier bodies.

In spite of this wartime activity normal railway requirements have been reasonably well maintained. During the year ended March 31st, 1942, a record total of 147,285,552 passenger journeys were completed by the Union's railways. Railway revenue from normal sources also reached a new peak, the previous record figure of £43,707,539 (\$175,922,854) for 1940-41 yielding place to £48,689,121 (\$195,963,712) in 1941-42.

The Union's harbours handled an unprecedented procession of merchant ships and warships using the Cape Sea Route. All provisioning and bunkering of this great traffic has strained the Administration's resources to the utmost, but a full and efficient service, including a repair service within certain limits, has been constantly maintained.

## **“Q” Supplies**

Railway construction and repair units have also been sent to North Africa. Apart from the railwaymen in the fighting ranks several companies of railwaymen have been engaged in vital maintenance and construction work, repairing or constructing railway bridges, repairing engines and trucks, and maintaining telegraph and pumping stations. In sixteen months South African railwaymen in the Middle East assembled 50,000 vehicles of more than 100 different types and sizes, and railway technicians are building and working railways, operating docks, repairing tanks, constructing railway telegraph systems, and assembling motor vehicles.

On the “Q” Supplies side South Africa has within her limitations made an equally significant contribution to the Allies' war effort. An army representing ten per cent of the population, clothed, shod, and equipped from head to foot bears testimony to the resourcefulness of the country's young boot and textile industries. This achieve-

ment involved the organisation and coordination of these industries for mass production, systemic allocation of orders, long-range policies in the acquisition of large supplies of cloth and other raw materials, conservation of domestic supplies, elimination of inferior material and rigid price control. Production in these lines is so well developed today that the output capacity far exceeds both the country's military and civil needs, and huge orders for boots and blankets are being filled on behalf of Great Britain and other Allied Nations. An army boot was produced, comfortable, pliable, and waterproof, totally different from the old type of black ammunition boot. Figures officially quoted in November, 1942, showed that the South African boot industry had already delivered three and a half million pairs to South African and Allied armies and that orders for seven million pairs of army boots were in hand. The boots are in two colours—tan for the Springboks and black for the Imperial Forces.

A leather research institute has been opened at Grahamstown, in the Cape Province, its investigations covering all problems ranging from raw materials to the finished products, as well as industrial, economic and labour management problems. During 1942 more than 700 industrial inquiries were handled by the institute which produced some 50 publications and reports. Several entirely new industrial products have been developed, thanks to the activities of this institute.

### *Feeding the Army*

South Africa had a number of efficient clothing factories when war broke out and factory production was organised to produce every type of uniform and textile equipment. Here also South Africa revealed unexpected resources. There were, for example, no reserve stocks of blankets in 1939, but within two years South Africa was not only meeting her own army requirements but had sent a quarter of a million blankets to fill overseas orders and had other big overseas orders in hand.

Restrictions on imports of clothing have given a great impetus to the Union's clothing factories. The Union is meeting its civilian as well as its army needs. Today some 20,000 employees of the industry are manufacturing the latest styles in men's and women's clothing, in addition to fulfilling large army orders. In Johannesburg and its environs alone there are 55 women's dress factories and more than 100 factories for men's clothing mainly built up within the last decade.

The despatch of large expeditionary forces to East Africa and later to the Middle East created new feeding problems as the bulk of the food required had to be canned. At the outbreak of war South Africa's canning industry was a small one, concentrating chiefly on jams and fruits. But within twelve months production was trebled and the range of foodstuffs canned extended out of all recognition.

By 1941 the Union was not only meeting its own full requirements in army canned meat and vegetable rations but was also filling big orders for her allies.

Besides feeding the army units based in the Union itself, whose demands are now 50 times greater than in the early months of the war, South Africa's food industry during 1942 supplied about 500 tons of canned meat and vegetable rations per month and large quantities of jam preserves and other foodstuffs to the South African troops in North Africa. Numerous convoys touching at South African ports are supplied with foodstuffs and South Africa's commitments in this respect also include the feeding of nearly 70,000 prisoners of war and also thousands of evacuees, mainly from the Middle East and Far East, who have found their way into the Union. These food supply commitments have called for State action and the Union Government has created a Food Control Organisation whose task has been to stimulate and assist food production. Farmers have cooperated fully and their efforts, coordinated with the activities of the Food Control Organisation, have raised South Africa's food production higher than was ever thought possible before the war.

Successful experiments have been made with the dehydration of meat and vegetables and, though this enterprise is still in its infancy, it is expected to have an important bearing on the volume of South Africa's food shipments to the Middle East and elsewhere.

South Africa claims to have one of the best-fed armies in the world. Dieticians have collaborated with army chefs and factory experts in the production of a balanced diet. A wide range of canned food is being produced—canned fish, canned crawfish, canned meat and vegetable rations, canned sausages, canned orange concentrates, and canned fruits, all providing wholesome changes from the old-fashioned diet of bully beef and "hard tack." Apart from meeting current military requirements, the industry is following a long-range policy of reserve stocks for export and is canning up to maximum capacity during the short but prolific fruit and vegetable season.

South Africa produces annually one of the world's largest crops of maize (corn) and normally exports a big percentage of its crop. Maize is now one of the staple items in the Union's food resources and is used to eke out the country's wheat supply which normally is not quite large enough to meet South Africa's consumption requirements. A standard war loaf is being baked and highly nutritious type of biscuit mass-produced for army requirements. South Africa fills her own requirements in dairy products and has found it possible from time to time to make food shipments also to Britain. The Union is one of the world's principal producers of sugar cane and also fills a substantial portion of Great Britain's wants in this regard. Before the war South Africa was shipping to Britain annually some five million trays of deciduous fruits and five million cases of oranges

and grapefruit. War shipping difficulties have put an end to this lucrative export trade, now largely confined to shipments of oranges for consumption by young children in England's war-scarred cities. But the fruit farmers have met the position squarely and a good deal of their products are being canned and preserved, while large supplies are diverted to provisioning the British and Allied convoys touching at South Africa's ports.

In making this big wartime industrial effort, South Africa has had a most stimulating response from its industrial workers both trained and untrained. On the administrative side Dr. van der Bijl is assisted by a panel of experts representing the best organised brains in all spheres of the Union's industrial life. Out of this panel a number of advisory committees have been formed to deal with such matters as munitions, machine tools, textiles, boots, etc. The workers themselves are adequately represented on these panels, the four largest trade unions being permanently represented on the Director-General's staff.

### *Training Technicians*

Even with the most cordial support and cooperation of the workers it was clear from the outset that there would be a big shortage of skilled labour, and to remedy this a Central Organisation for Technical Training (known in South Africa as the C.O.T.T. scheme) was called into being. This scheme has taken a significant place in South Africa's industrial economy and is a departure in industrial training which should give equally satisfactory results in peacetime. Under this scheme thousands of young men from the remote country districts, as well as the towns, are trained in semi-skilled work. They are given an intensive training to take their place in the army on the home front and at the same time they are equipped with a trade at which they will be able to work when peace conditions return.

The trainees are placed on a wage scale with additional allowances for families and are given free medical and dental attention. In this way South Africa is building up a big reservoir of high-class operatives who, in the post-war period, will be able to take their places in the country's expanding industrial and agricultural interests. Every six months some 3,000 men ranging from 18 to 45—but mostly boys—receive an intensive course of technical training, and every year since the inauguration of the scheme South Africa's industry has been enriched by at least 6,000 technicians all capable of speeding up progress in the war, all freed from the bogey of unemployment and poverty. Every recruit to this course of basic training undertakes to serve in either a military technical unit or in war production work for a period of four years or for the duration of the war, which-

ever should be the shorter. The Defence Department has undertaken, should the war last less than four years, to demobilise in such a way that all these men will have the opportunity of completing their four years' service and so be assured of a career. The scheme was drawn up in consultation with the trade unions who, it may be added, have agreed that there shall be no strikes and no migration of labour for the duration of the war.

### *Planning Ahead*

This is long-term planning and there is long-term planning also in the establishment of an Industrial Development Corporation set up by Act of Parliament in May, 1940. The Act called into being a corporation with a share capital of £5,000,000 (roughly \$20,000,000), the object of the corporation being to give guidance in the promotion of new industries and to give certain financial assistance, the main object being that industrial development within the Union should be planned, expedited, and conducted on sound business principles. It was laid down that no industry was likely to be helped unless it proved that it could stabilise itself in wartime and maintain itself in peacetime without any undue measure of protection.

This corporation has among others assisted in establishing on a sound footing a plastic industry, an animal feed industry, a heavy engineering industry, a paper industry, and a cotton and wool textile industry.

In other respects, too, South Africa has done some solid planning for the years to follow the war. A Civil Re-employment Board has been established to frame principles for the reabsorption of men and women returning from active service to civil life. A Cabinet Committee dealing with post-war reconstruction was appointed in 1941, and in March, 1942, a Social and Economic Planning Council was called into being with very extensive terms of reference.

"We have now reached a stage," said General Smuts at the inaugural meeting of the Council on June 13, 1942, "where we have to think out and work out plans for the future. The time has come to plan and to think out our projects, so far as it is economically possible, to survey future development, to see what this country is fitted for, and to take the wisest steps possible with a view to the best use of the natural resources of this country."

In 1938-39, the last financial year of the peace, the Union spent on revenue account on purposes other than defence just over £40,000,000 (roughly \$161,000,000). On defence it spent in that year £2,000,000 (roughly \$8,000,000). For the year ending March 31st, 1943, the Union's estimated defence expenditure is £96,000,000 (roughly \$385,000,000).



The modern "Great Trek." The South Africans traversed the full length of a great continent to defend their freedom on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.



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## *This is South Africa: its people, its history, its politics*

Many people overseas think of South Africa as a "dark" portion of the "Dark Continent" and as a hot, semi-barbaric country enjoying few of the amenities of modern, civilised life. In fact, the Union of South Africa and the United States of America have many similarities and much in common. South Africa's larger cities, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, are very like American cities. These and other cities and towns are fine, modern places enjoying all those public services, cultural and social amenities and economic advantages which are part and parcel of life in American cities. The industrialisation of the Union, as the preceding pages have shown, has made noteworthy progress. The country has an extensive and highly developed railway transport system and had embarked on civil aviation on a large scale in the years preceding the war. It is also a great motoring country and the largest overseas buyer of American automobiles, two of America's largest automobile companies having assembly plants in South Africa. The educational standard of South Africa's white population, whether city or country residents, is a very high one and South Africans take a lively interest in world affairs. A large number of newspapers are published throughout the country, in English and Afrikaans, the big national dailies carrying a survey of world news comparable to the best services in British and American newspapers.

In the matter of climate, the Union of South Africa acknowledges no rivals. The whole area of the Union—472,000 square miles, about the same area as the Middle West States of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, plus the State of Kansas—falls within the South temperate zone. It is a sunny land, consistently mild in climate, seldom experiencing extremes of heat and cold though there is a regular winter snowfall in parts of the country. Most of the country is high-lying, rising in a series of plateaux, ringed by great mountain chains, until at Johannesburg, the heart of the goldfields in the Transvaal province, a height of 6,000 feet is reached—an exhilarating atmosphere that partly accounts for the

“pep” with which South Africans tackle their national undertakings. Scenically, also, South Africa acknowledges few rivals and is one of the world’s leading tourist countries. Its native (aboriginal) life has fascinated American visitors no less than its wild life. Game preservation is a matter of national policy; there are game reserves all over the country, the Kruger National Park (in the Northern Transvaal) being the largest wild life sanctuary in the world.

### *Largest White Community in Africa*

Though it knew no white settlement until the latter half of the Seventeenth Century the Union with its 2,230,000 whites today holds the largest settled white community on the whole of the African Continent which before the war counted in all roughly 4,000,000 whites and 150,000,000 non-European inhabitants. In recent years the Union’s influence has been strongly felt in the Southern African sub-continent, not only among the British colonies which are her neighbours but also in Portuguese, Belgian and French territory, and the Union has more and more come to play a leading role in the problems and the interests common to all these countries. A pan-African transport conference was held in Pretoria not long before the outbreak of war. Postal communications have been simplified by inter-state conferences. The Union has met frequent requests from neighbouring Governments for the services and advice of its professional officers. Veterinary officers have been sent northwards to collaborate in checking stock diseases. Many friendly visits have been exchanged by public figures and the will to cooperate and solve common problems demonstrated again and again. As General Smuts said at an earlier stage of the war: “Now is the time for us to readjust our outlook on African affairs and to develop a new conception of our relations with our neighbours. We must demonstrate and bring home to all where our community of interests lies. We cannot stand aloof, we of this richly endowed South Africa. If we wish to take our rightful place as leader in pan-African development and in the shaping of future policies and events in this vast continent we must face the realities and facts of the present and seize the opportunities which these offer.”

This African viewpoint involves no question of African imperialism nor does it affect in any way the several sovereignties or European loyalties or relationships of the various communities in Southern Africa. It means a broadening of the basis of cooperation between these states and here the Union of South Africa, as the largest and most strongly established European community in the sub-continent, is taking the lead. The despatch of scores of thousands of Springboks to East and North Africa must foster these relationships and immeasurably widen the Union’s own horizons in national outlook.



The Union of South Africa, founded in 1910, comprises four Provinces: The Transvaal and Orange Free State (former republics), the Cape and Natal.

### *Two White Races*

A word more about the people of South Africa. The (approximately) 2,230,000 whites are roughly 60 per cent of Dutch and French Huguenot descent and roughly 40 per cent of British descent. South Africans, generally speaking, do not think of themselves today as being Dutch or British—though each section is equally proud of its ancestry—but call themselves South Africans and are “nationals” of the Union of South Africa.

South Africa has two official languages, English and Afrikaans, and these are used side by side in public and private life with complete impartiality, most South Africans, in fact, being bilingual. Afrikaans is a modification of the Dutch language. It is one of the youngest offshoots of the language root to which the English language itself is related and, philologically regarded, is a complete modern language and is so recognised by such great overseas universities as Oxford and the University of London. Afrikaans has developed a virile literature and has produced some outstanding writers. It figures prominently in the African programmes of the B.B.C. from London and direct broadcasts in Afrikaans from the United States to South Africa are contemplated.

Where a distinction is drawn between the white races in South Africa they are usually described as "Afrikaans-speaking" and as "English-speaking" South Africans. The term "Afrikaner" in general usage simply means "South African," but there is a political usage of the term where it is accepted as meaning a South African of Dutch descent. South Africans of Dutch descent are not today referred to as "Boers" in the sense the term was used during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902. "Boer" simply means farmer and an English-speaking South African farmer may claim with as much justice to being a "boer" as his Afrikaans-speaking neighbour.

### ***Population Figures***

A white person in South Africa is a "European" and a Bantu, an Asiatic, a Malay, or any other person of colour is a "non-European." South Africans talk of "Natives" when they mean the Blacks and the term "Native" has a well-recognised legal usage in South Africa. There is a Minister of Native Affairs, a Native Affairs Department, a Natives' Representative Council, and so on. The Natives belong to the great Bantu race and in official and everyday usage the terms "Bantu" and "Native" are customarily regarded as interchangeable.

The Bantu far outnumber the whites in South Africa, the latest estimated figure, in 1941, placing their number at 7,377,000. The Coloureds (persons of mixed blood) number 845,000, and the Asiatics, mainly Indians settled in the Province of Natal and the Province of the Transvaal, 278,000.

### ***Historical Background***

South Africa's decision to enter the war was not a unanimous one, but was taken on a majority vote in the Union Parliament. The Opposition in the Union Parliament is isolationist in sentiment and opposed to the country's participation in the war. To explain the political situation in South Africa today it is necessary to give some of the historical background to the events leading up to a change of Government on September 4, 1939, and the formation of a Government under General Jan Christiaan Smuts pledged to wage war against Germany and to defend South Africa against aggression.

In many respects present problems in South Africa can best be explained in terms of history. The first European settlers at the Cape were the Dutch—former officials of the one-time powerful Dutch East India Company, who had been permitted to take their discharge and to settle beyond the confines of the fort and "refreshment station" which the Dutch had established at the Cape in 1652. A farmer community of Dutch settlers gradually made their way



Johannesburg, "Golden City" of the Transvaal, is little more than 50 years old. It has an exhilarating climate and a skyline like that of New York.

inland, and for nearly a century and a half the Dutch, strengthened by a strong influx of French Huguenots, lived in South Africa a life untrammelled by the attentions of the Dutch East India Company or any other authority. They lived rugged, independent lives, were intensely freedom-loving and individualistic, intolerant of interference, and guided their lives by the precepts of the Bible.

In 1795, through circumstances not unlike those which obtain in Europe today, the British occupied the Cape for strategical reasons. A second and permanent occupation took place in 1806, when the British took over the administration of the Cape more or less as successors in title to the Dutch East India Company, which had by this time declined both in power and prestige.

### *The 1820 Settlers*

The year 1820 saw the arrival of the first British settlers—an event which has the same meaning for South Africans of British descent as the voyage of the Mayflower has for the descendants of the American pioneers. The "1820 Settlers" shared the same pioneering hardships with the Dutch frontiersmen and together for more

than half a century they faced and fought hostile tribes who were continually ravaging the frontier farms and villages of the Eastern Cape.

The Dutch and the English became partners in the European colonisation of southernmost Africa, sharing in the task of opening up the interior and destined to participate eventually in a common South African nationhood. The British, as one South African historian expressed it, "came as a distinct element. Their political domination, as well as their sharply defined national characteristics, prevented their absorption into the growing South African nation, as the French and Germans had been absorbed. It was just as unnatural that they on their part should absorb the Dutch element in the population which was the stronger numerically, and had just as sharply defined national characteristics as their own. The Dutch and the British were to find out that they had many a bond of union, many a common sentiment and tradition that might serve as a basis of cooperation and friendship. But they were to find also how strong was the individuality which each of the two elements inherited from the past, and to learn that it was only on the basis of equality of status and equality of esteem that their comprehension in a greater whole could be effected. But this lesson only long and bitter experience could teach South Africa."

### *The Great Trek*

On the eastern frontier of the Cape, facing the huge and almost unexplored territory inhabited by the Bantu (Native) races, the relationships between the Dutch farmers and the British settlers were consistently friendly, and it did not take long before the newcomers found themselves in accord with the Dutch pioneers on most of the issues that affected them as a European community in a semi-barbaric country.

Yet, though the foundations were even then being laid for the South African nation of Afrikaans- and English-speaking peoples of the future, the coming of the British settlers provided the occasion for a change in Government policy which, for various reasons that need not be entered into here, caused great discontent among the Dutch farmers. This discontent came to a head in 1836, when there took place a mass migration of Dutch farmers to the north. This was the epic of the Great Trek—a dramatic chapter in South African history destined to have a profound influence on relationships between English and Dutch for more than 100 years. In fact, the shadow of the Greak Trek, in many ways comparable to America's "covered wagon" epic, and all that it implied, the expression of the freedom-loving character of the Afrikaner and his desire to conduct his own affairs without interference, in some respects still falls across the South African scene today.



South Africa's "White House" is the home of Premiers. American sailors visit Groote Schuur, Field Marshal Smuts's official residence in Cape Town.

### *The Two Republics*

The middle of the 19th century saw the foundation of the independent Boer Republics, the Republic of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic, the latter more commonly known as the South African Republic. For the ensuing 40 years the relationships between these two Republics and their neighbours, the Cape Colony and the Colony of Natal, were a chequered pattern. In many respects the relationships between the English and the Dutch were completely friendly, and repeated attempts to bring about a federation of the four States met with a large measure of sympathy from the citizens of the Republics. But there were also irreconcilable points of difference, notably after the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1884, which brought a large influx of strangers into the Transvaal. These differences culminated in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, in which the two Republics, after a stubborn fight which won the admiration of the world, lost their independence.

This war left a legacy of bitterness, based on memories of suffering and loss, which was deeply fraught with future evil for South Africa. But the war also had a credit side. In many respects the Dutch and

the English "discovered" each other; they had learned to appreciate each other as doughty and chivalrous opponents. In some ways this South African war of 1899–1902 may be regarded as the last of the "gentlemen's wars," for while it brought in its train all the misery attendant on war, it also saw the performance of many extraordinary acts of courtesy and chivalry, and the foundations were laid of mutual respect and appreciation—solid foundations on which Dutch and English have since almost succeeded in completing the edifice of a united South Africa. One of the results of the war was the discovery by the Dutch people of itself as a race. Dutch nationalism, or Afrikaner nationalism as it is known today, was given direction and purpose, and the Afrikaans language, today fully accepted as a modern language, underwent a phenomenal development.

### *A Venture of Faith*

The Peace Treaty which ended the war between Boer and Briton was signed at Vereeniging (which, appropriately, means "coming together") a small town on the Transvaal—Free State border, on May 31st, 1902. Soon there opened one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the unification of South Africa. Those doughty Republican leaders, General Louis Botha and General Jan Christiaan Smuts, threw their great influence on the side of conciliating the two white races in South Africa and securing for the defeated Republicans the fullest say in the administration of their countries. They met a more than sympathetic response from England where a new Liberal Government under Campbell-Bannerman had come into power. Within five years of the signing of the Peace of Vereeniging the Transvaal and the Free State were granted responsible government and were ruled as British colonies by the defeated leaders who had signed that peace. "The Campbell-Bannerman Government," says a South African historian, "had embarked upon a magnificent venture of faith, and out of that faith the attainment of the Union of South Africa was one of the first fruits."

Union was achieved within eight years. In 1910 the two former Republics and the two British colonies, the Cape and Natal, were welded together into the Union of South Africa and the field was open for the development of South Africanism in the broader sense. There were many problems still to be overcome and new problems soon presented themselves. After 1912 Dutch nationalism developed strongly under the leadership of General J. B. M. Hertzog, founder and leader of the Nationalist Party. This grew from strength to strength in Parliament in opposition to the South African Party, which governed the country, first under the Premiership of General Louis Botha, and after 1919 under that of General Smuts. In 1924 the Nationalist Party, with the help of South Africa's small Labour





Field Marshal Smuts inspects a guard of honour of the South African Women's Auxiliary Army Services, popularly known in the Union as the "Waasies."

Party, proved strong enough to take over the reins of Government, and from then until 1932 the Nationalists were in power, with General Smuts and his South African Party in opposition.

South Africa's politics are fairly strong meat and are pursued with an intensity of feeling and outspokenness which often creates a false impression overseas. The political division in South Africa then, as it is now, was by no means a racial one. Hertzog counted on the support of the English-speaking Labourites. Smuts, it is true, had the support of the majority of English-speaking people, but then he also had the wholehearted support of a great body of Afrikaans-speaking voters. Today, even more than at any other stage of his political career, General Smuts can claim loyalty and support from both the Afrikaans- and the English-speaking people.

### ***Political Parties***

For many years the differences between General Hertzog and General Smuts dominated the South African political scene. But in 1932 when, following the prolonged depression, the state of the country demanded the formation of a coalition government, it

appeared that these differences were not irreconcilable. It was considered probable that, if an appeal had been made to the country, General Smuts would have secured a working majority in Parliament. He chose, however, a course which in a large measure gave South Africa a rest from the party political squabbles of the past. He made common cause with General Hertzog in a new Party, the combination of the old South African Party and the Nationalist Party into a new United Party with General Hertzog as Premier and General Smuts as Deputy Premier.

The United Party provided South Africa with the strongest administration it had ever had in its history, the Government numbering 115 supporters in the House of 153 members. General Hertzog's supporters did not all follow him into the United Party, but, under the leadership of Dr. D. F. Malan, some 25 members of the old Nationalist Party preferred to go into Opposition, retaining the title of the Nationalist Party. On the other hand, there were some English-speaking members of General Smuts's old Party who would not participate in the United Party Government and formed a small English-speaking Opposition under the title of the Dominion Party, led by Colonel C. F. Stallard.

### *Neutrality Issue*

In general terms, the United Party represented the ideal of a South African nationhood based on complete equality in all respects of the English- and Afrikaans-speaking sections in the Union. The Nationalist Party represented the Republican and isolationist ideal, while the Dominion Party gave expression to a fairly vocal Imperialist sentiment in South Africa.

When they joined forces in the interests of a United South Africa, General Smuts and General Hertzog agreed on all points with one notable exception—the question of neutrality, the issue whether Britain's participation in a war also meant South Africa's participation in that war. General Hertzog's attitude was that, as a sovereign independent state, South Africa was not necessarily obliged to go to war if Britain went to war. General Smuts held the view that if Great Britain were involved in war, and her existence and future were at stake, then South Africa herself was in danger and could not remain neutral.

The two Generals, in the interests of political amity and cooperation, agreed to differ on this point, but the issue demanded urgent settlement when World War No. 2 broke out on September 3rd, 1939. Parliament was in session at the time. General Hertzog introduced a motion in favour of a policy of benevolent neutrality for South Africa. This was rejected by 80 votes to 67 and the House of Assembly by the same margin of votes adopted the amendment



The statue of Jan Van Riebeeck, first Dutch Governor of the Cape (1652), looks across the city of Cape Town at Table Mountain and its "cloth" of cloud.

introduced by General Smuts that the Union sever relations with Germany. General Hertzog's resignation as Premier followed and General Smuts, as leader of the United Party, formed a new Government, Colonel C. F. Stallard, leader of the Dominion Party, and Mr. Walter B. Madeley, leader of the Labour Party (respectively represented in the House by nine and by five members) being included in the new Cabinet. General Smuts's working majority in Parliament subsequently increased to about 20, normally regarded as a comfortable working majority, while his supporters claim that he has a very much more solid backing in the country, from both the Afrikaans- and the English-speaking electorate, than is reflected by the strength of the Parties in Parliament.

The Opposition eventually found itself split into three factions. General Hertzog retired from the political scene after some months, and his death took place in November, 1942. Dr. Daniel Francois Malan is leader of the chief opposition group, the Reunited Nationalist Party, which counts 39 members in the House. Mr. Oswald Pirow, who was South Africa's Minister of Defence before the change of Government in September, 1939, leads a "New Order" Group of 17 members, and there is an Afrikaner Party group of nine members

whose leader, Mr. Nicolaas Havenga, former Minister of Finance, is no longer in Parliament.

These groups make common cause in their opposition to South Africa's participation in the war, but the Afrikaner Party has repeatedly supported the Government on other issues. Parliamentary opposition leaders have from time to time declared themselves sternly opposed to anything smacking of unconstitutional practice and have reprobated acts of sabotage in South Africa believed to have been engineered by enemy agents.

### *The Government*

In terms of the South Africa Act of 1909 (embodying the Union's constitution) Pretoria is the seat of Government and Cape Town the seat of the Legislature of the Union. This practically established a system of two capitals, though the Act does not describe either city under that term. Under this arrangement the headquarters of the various departments of State with their staffs are placed in Pretoria while the Houses of Parliament and the Parliamentary establishment are situated in Cape Town. In everyday practice South Africans speak of Pretoria as the "administrative capital" and of Cape Town as the "legislative capital." The two cities are about a thousand miles apart.

The Union Parliament is the sovereign legislative power in and over the Union to the exclusion of all Acts of the British Parliament passed after 1931. Parliament consists of the King (represented by a Governor-General), the Senate, and the House of Assembly. Since April, 1937, a South African, Sir Patrick Duncan, has been Governor-General of South Africa.

The Senate, which functions mainly as a House of Review, with no power to veto or amend certain monetary Bills passed by the Assembly, consists of 44 members, partly nominated and partly elected. Eight Senators are specially charged with the interests of the non-white population.

The House of Assembly, consisting of 153 members, is an elected body and its members are referred to as M.P.'s (Members of Parliament). Three M.P.'s are elected by Bantu (Native) voters in the Cape Province whose names are listed separately from the white voters' roll. Only whites may be elected to the Senate or the Assembly.

The Natives Representative Council, of which Natives are members, considers and reports upon any proposed legislation which may affect the Bantu population and recommends any legislation which it considers necessary in the interests of the Bantu peoples. There is also other machinery for safeguarding and promoting the interests of the Bantu races.

The Union consists of four Provinces, the Cape, the Transvaal, Natal, and the Orange Free State. Each has an Administrator and a Provincial Council with limited legislative functions.

### *Ministers of State*

Following is a list of South African Ministers of State:

PRIME MINISTER	} . . . . .	{	Field Marshal the Rt. Hon.
MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS			J. C. Smuts, P.C., C.H.,
MINISTER OF DEFENCE			K.C., D.T.D., M.P.
MINISTER OF FINANCE	} . . . . .		The Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr, M.P.
MINISTER OF EDUCATION			
MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIES. The Hon. S. F. Waterson, M.P.			
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE	} . . . . .	{	Col.-Comdt. the Hon. W. R. Collins,
AND FORESTRY			D.T.D., D.S.O., M.P.
MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR	} . . . . .		The Hon. H. G. Lawrence, K.C., M.P.
MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH			
MINISTER OF RAILWAYS & HARBOURS. . . The Hon. F. C. Sturrock, M.P.			
MINISTER OF POSTS AND	} . . . . .		Senator the Hon. C. F. Clarkson
TELEGRAPHS			
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS			
MINISTER OF LABOUR	} . . . . .		The Hon. W. B. Madeley, M.P.
MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE			
MINISTER OF MINES. . . . .	} . . . . .	{	Col. the Hon. C. F. Stallard, K.C.,
			D.S.O., M.C., M.P.
MINISTER OF LANDS. . . . . Senator the Hon. A. M. Conroy			
MINISTER OF JUSTICE. . . . . Dr. the Hon. C. F. Steyn, K.C., M.P.			
MINISTER OF NATIVE AFFAIRS. . . . .	} . . . . .	{	Maj. the Hon. P.V.G. van der Byl,
			M.C., M.P.

### *South West Africa*

The Union Government is the Mandatory authority over South West Africa, the former German colony which surrendered to South African troops in July, 1915.

### *Representation in the U.S.A.*

South Africa maintains a Legation in Washington, D. C. (at 3101 Massachusetts Avenue) and has been represented here since Janu-

ary, 1934, by the Hon. Ralph William Close, K.C., Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. There is a South African Consulate at No. 500 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

### ***South African Government Supply Mission***

In order to ensure that the much-needed supplies from North America shall reach South Africa, the Government maintains a Mission in Washington, which maintains close relations with the many Government war agencies of the United States of America. This Mission is charged with the duty of procurement of goods required for the successful prosecution of the war and the maintenance of South Africa on a wartime basis, either through the medium of lend-lease in appropriate cases or for cash.

Commercial channels continue to be utilised over a wide field and in this respect the Mission assists American exporters in obtaining the necessary priority ratings for manufacture and export licences. The shipment of goods to South Africa from United States ports is controlled by the Mission in collaboration with the War Shipping Administration through a system of ratings based upon the essentiality and priority of the cargo as assessed by the South African Government.

Purchases on behalf of the Government are also made by the Mission in Canada through the happy collaboration of the Canadian Department of Munitions and Supply, whilst commercial purchases from the same source are assisted by the Accredited Representative for South Africa in Ottawa, who also controls shipments from Canadian ports.

The Headquarters of the Mission are at 907 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C., and the telegraphic address is *Sapurcom*.

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H. M. MOOLMAN

3101 Massachusetts Ave.,  
Washington, D. C.





*The Springbok*

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The  
UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA